

Chinese Policies in Sinkiang

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half. Yang Tseng-hsin's attempted reform of this *corvée* was ineffective; the practice and the abuses continued.

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In the same year Yang embarked on another reform, reducing the rate of interest on loans of grain from the public granaries. The management of granaries in many districts was corrupt. When the official authorized the issue of grain, eight *tou* (about ten pounds) would be entered on the slip as ten *tou*; but when he collected grain in repayment, only ten *tou* would be counted for every twelve *tou* weighed in. Thus what was originally intended as a measure of social welfare and economic stabilization was made to serve the collection of interest at a rate of 50 per cent. To prevent the practice of this form of usury by bureaucrats, Yang ordered the enforcement of standard measurements and the limitation of interest to a standard 10 per cent.

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Bureaucrats also engaged in usury by lending to moneylenders. In the Tarim Basin, especially, pawnshops were managed by merchants of several nationalities: Chinese, Uighurs, Indians claiming the protection of the British Consulate General at Kashgar, Tatars who formerly held Tsarist Russian passports, and Tungans or Chinese-speaking Moslems. The rates of interest traditionally charged were 7, 8, and even 10 per cent per month. At the same time there existed government money bureaus which were supposed to charge only 1 per cent per month. Under these conditions, officials found it easy to make low-interest loans not to the poor, but to prosperous and solvent merchants who reloaned the money to pawnbrokers, at not less than 2 per cent per month, who in turn made loans to the poor at much higher rates. In this way the high interest paid by the poorest people paid a profit to the pawnbroker, to the merchant backing the pawnbroker, and to the official who authorized the loan of public money to the merchant. The abuses inherent in the system were made worse by the fact that all too often the rich merchant was the local Beg or District Elder, who could use his official authority, backed by the higher authority of the Chinese magistrate, to enforce the collection of principal and interest. In 1922 Yang Tseng-hsin attempted to end these abuses, first by forbidding the combination of private

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- 426 loans and the lending of public money, and then by ordering the
661 complete withholding of government loans.²⁰

* 175 More effective, because more easy to carry out, was Yang's
439 policy of regulating trade balances. He required merchants to limit imports to values which would not exceed the value of exports. The object of this policy was both to prevent the draining of wealth from the province and to prevent Uighur merchants from banking their accumulated wealth in Russia (before the Russian Revolution), and also to stop Chinese merchants from holding their wealth in provinces other than Sinkiang. He himself, however, through Chinese merchants acting as his agents, sold Sinkiang exports, principally in Tientsin, and then banked the proceeds not in China but under the American flag in the Philippines.

* 175 During Yang Tseng-hsin's rule Sinkiang was forced to change
652 its fiscal basis completely. Before the Revolution, the province had been heavily subsidized by the Imperial treasury. The annual subsidy was at one time as high as 2,920,000 taels; then it fell to 2,600,000 taels, and by the time of the Republic the poverty of the Central Government cut off the subsidy altogether. Yang Tseng-hsin then issued his own provincial paper currency to a face value of about 10,000,000 taels.²¹ This measure inevitably caused an inflation and considerable hardship.

* 175 Eventually, no less than four paper currencies were established
436 in the same province. The Urumchi, Turfan, Ili, and Kashgar regions each had its own currency, and each currency exchanged against the others at different rates. Each paper currency, carrying values not in dollars but in taels, had a subsidiary copper coinage. Only in the Kashgar region, with its two-way trade with both India and Russian Turkistan, was there a certain amount of silver backing, with silver coins in circulation in addition to paper.

²⁰ For these reforms or attempted reforms, see Tseng Wen-wu, *op. cit.*, pp. 595-596.

²¹ Chiang Chün-chang, *Hsinchiang Chin-Yin Lun*, Nanking, 1936 (reprinted Chungking, 1939), p. 45 (in Chinese).

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563 depends on his herds: they are his only resource, his only
233 wealth, and his only pride. When two nomads meet, whether
(521) they are Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Mongols, or Tibetans, the first
(554) subject that comes up is their cattle. Among nomads, social
(422) status is established by the possession of horses, camels,
and livestock in general, and only secondarily determined
by titles or descent. This is especially true for the Kirghiz,
Kazakhs and Tibetans, and to a lesser degree for the
Mongols, among whom aristocratic birth (real or imagined)
plays an important role.

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(342) The average nomad's life can be described as follows: he
(352) lives in a roomy felt tent, furnished with house altar, in the
(353) case of Buddhists, or with an artistically made book-stand
for the Quran in the case of Muslims, and some chests and
carpets. The whole family takes care of the livestock, and
periodically the migration unit moves during the summer time

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(621) from pasture to pasture, preserving the richest and most
protected grazing land for the winter time. The weather
plays a fatal role in the welfare of the nomad's livestock, and
every so often a migration unit (the ail, the aul, the ayir,

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(614) the omoq, otoq, xotn, or uruq, the ulus or even the aimaq)
(426) loses its livestock. In this case, those clans which still own
(476) enough livestock divide their herds and lend part of them to
those who suffered the loss. Collective cooperation is exer-
cised in this respect by Kazakhs, Kirghiz and Mongols,
while the nomadic Tibetans, in a similar situation, have quite
a reputation for robbing neighboring tribes of their livestock.

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563 The nomadic way of life, the close contact with nature and
971 dependence on nature promotes animism, shamanism, and spir-
itualism, which goes hand in hand with the prevailing religions
of Islam (in the case of the Kirghiz, Kazakhs, Salars, and
some Tibetan clans) and Buddhism (in the case of the Mongols,
Tibetans, and Sarigh-Uighurs). As a general rule, the nomadic
Kirghiz and Kazakh are not very fanatic or ardent Muslims, and
neither are the Mongols very pious Buddhists, but still, both
feel strongly about their religious although they are rather lax
in their observance. No matter how poor a Buddhist nomad
(792) is, he voluntarily supports and feeds wandering lamas,
(794) invites several on major occasions (birth, death, and marriage
if the bride's father can afford it), pays them, and finally is
accustomed to the old tradition of giving a small percentage of
his livestock every year to Buddhist monasteries. All
nomads are very superstitious, and the relationship between
cause and effect is often misinterpreted, e. g., in the case
of disease or weather. It is safe to say that the dominant
motives of the nomads are economic in the first place and
religious in the second place.